



# **Notes from the Director**

**No. 28**

30 August 1978

## **COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC**

Is greater openness just a passing fancy? Can we ride out the current efforts by the public and the press to uncover every secret operation in the expectation that this too will pass and, when it does, we will be able to return to the traditional secrecy we once enjoyed? The answer is a simple but unequivocal, no. Moreover, we should not aspire to this.

Recent investigations and exposures have opened a door which cannot be closed. The realities of recent history cannot be ignored. A significant evolutionary step has been taken in the relationship between the public and the CIA which will not be wished away. But this is not bad. Greater openness is fundamentally in both the public's and the CIA's best interests.

- The American taxpayer has a right to expect a return on the taxes he pays. We should make every effort to maximize that return by sharing with the public all the information we can within the constraints of national security interests.
- As technical collection systems proliferate and the amount of information we collect grows, we must make every effort to reduce the amount of secrets we keep. It is to our benefit to feel a certain amount of external pressure to classify only what is truly sensitive and move the rest into the public domain. It is too easy in a bureaucracy to classify everything. For an intelligence organization to do so would be both inept and dangerous.
- The public depends on Congressional oversight to assure them that we are functioning within the law and in a responsible manner. By our being forthright with the Congress, we satisfy this legitimate public concern and gain both Congressional guidance and their sharing of responsibility.
- Finally, public support is essential to the survival of every government department or agency. The CIA cannot expect this support unless the public, by knowing in a general sense what we are doing, appreciates the important role we play in the national well-being. The effects of the past few years' disclosures might have been far less severe if the public had had a better understanding of how well they were being served otherwise.

A policy of greater openness is the inevitable result. This does not mean that we are going to throw open the front doors and unlock the files. Legitimate secrets must

be protected as vigorously as ever. But at the same time, we must recognize that a greater degree of openness is a basic charge in the way we must do business. I urge you to be conscious of unnecessary or over-classification, to be sensitive to opportunities where candor will improve understanding without harming operations, and, finally, to accept and support this policy fully.

## **WHAT THE DCI IS SAYING IN PUBLIC**

In meeting with the media and the public, I have found there are certain recurring themes inherent in their queries. The brief responses below are somewhat typical of answers I gave to various questions while on a recent speaking trip to the West Coast.

### **ENEMY COVERT ACTION**

It is time some media and public attention is focused on the activities of some of our detractors. A group in Washington, D.C. has set themselves up to systematically uncover and expose intelligence activities. They have begun to publish a *Covert Action Bulletin* with the avowed purpose of disclosing sensitive information. A week long Youth Congress has just concluded in Havana which became a platform for anti-CIA and anti-American propaganda. A new book called *Dirty Works* is about to be published that purports to disclose the names of many CIA personnel. All of those activities take money and coordinated planning. I would urge some of you investigative reporters to look into these activities like you do the CIA.

### **LEAKS**

The unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information has become one of my major concerns. We must tighten security around sensitive information on which we depend. Disclosures not only alert our enemies to what we know, but they also dry up our sources of information. Assets have told us that they hesitate to provide information because of the fear it will appear in the next day's newspapers. Our relations with other intelligence services are also damaged because governments are reluctant to provide us information they have collected for fear it will be disclosed. More importantly, lives are endangered—the lives of our employees, our agents—and in the long run, yours and mine.

### **ROLE OF HUMAN COLLECTOR**

While collection by advanced technical means has made enormous strides in recent years, it can never replace the need for the human collector in the field. Indeed, as technology increases, so does the need for the human spy who alone can collect information on future plans, on motivation and on intentions. We still haven't been able to invent a technical tool that looks inside a man's head.

### **CHARTER LEGISLATION**

New charter legislation is highly desirable. It will put a comprehensive statutory base under the intelligence function. At the same time the new

legislation must not get so detailed that it will inhibit collection and analysis and stifle individual initiative. Intelligence business requires risk-taking both in the gathering of intelligence and in analyzing it. Analysts every day have to stick their necks out to obtain a piece of information or make judgments. We welcome adequate oversight but don't need micro-management from the outside.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stansfield Turner", written in a cursive, flowing style.

**STANSFIELD TURNER**  
Director